**ST PATRICK’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, HILLTOWN**



**handwriting policy**

**SEPTember 2021**

**Progress through partnership**

**Mission Statement**

St Patrick’s Primary School, Hilltown, will provide a well ordered and caring environment in which the children can work and play. As part of a believing community committed to a Catholic way of life, we believe that all are equal in the sight of God and that each child should have the opportunity to ‘walk tall’ within themselves, knowing that they are important, whatever their individual talents and abilities. We strive to work in conjunction with the home and parish so that children can reach their full potential as well as growing in their own self-esteem, confidence and self-discipline. Children will be helped to develop an attitude of caring for and sharing with others, as well as cultivating a healthy tolerance for everyone’s beliefs and respect for their property and environment. We encourage shared responsibility among our pupils and reinforce good behaviour by actively encouraging and promoting qualities like patience, gentleness and a sense of ‘fair play’. We recognise the need for pupils to progress through a well-defined programme for work in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils will have access to relevant teaching and learning through a variety of teaching approaches. We will provide pupils with stimulating, enjoyable, rewarding and demanding experiences. We will match the curriculum to individual needs, with provision being made for more able children and those with special needs. Pupils will be encouraged to produce their own personal best, dependent on individual ability and aptitude. Resources in the school will be of a high standard and renewed as appropriate. The teaching and non-teaching staff, along with the principal and pupils will work in harmony to maintain a high standard of work, personal achievement and good behaviour. Our school motto is ‘Progress through Partnership’.

Our school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) underlines our school’s vision:

‘Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.’

**Rationale**

In St Patrick’s Primary School we recognise that the quality and fluency of a child’s handwriting is often the basis on which performance judgements are made. We know that the ability to write legibly and appropriately is a skill without which children will not be able to reach and demonstrate their true potential throughout their school careers. We appreciate the need for a clearly structured programme with full coverage of the technical aspects of writing including letter formation, basic joins and printing. This programme must be taught in meaningful and relevant contexts particularly in the areas of punctuation, spelling and vocabulary.

In order to develop a legible style children will be taught:

* How to hold a pencil/pen
* To write from left to right and top to bottom of the page
* To start and finish letters correctly
* To form letters of regular size and shape
* To put regular spaces between letters and words
* How to form lower and upper case letters
* The importance of clean and neat presentation in order to communicate their meaning effectively
* To write legibly in both joined and printed styles
* To use different forms of writing for different purposes

**Organisation**

There are many opportunities to practice the skills of handwriting in the course of writing across the curriculum. However, we also recognise the necessity of providing regular lessons for the teaching and/or revision of handwriting skills.

The frequency and length of handwriting lessons will vary according to the age and competence of the children. With young children it will be appropriate to have short, daily lessons, while older children will benefit from one or two sessions each week.

**The Role of the Teacher**

As handwriting is a movement skill, demonstration by the class teacher is essential.

The class teacher will:

* Build on what has gone before
* Observe the writing carefully
* Intervene and offer support and encouragement
* Prevent faults from becoming ingrained habits

Common faults include:

* Incorrect letter formation
* Poem posture
* Paper positioning

**The Writing Process**

* Children will be encouraged to experience writing with different tools e.g. pens, pencils, chalk, crayons and markers.
* In Primary 7 children will be encouraged to write in ink.
* In the early stages children will be encouraged to make free-flowing movements and to produce large patterns, letters and words on large sheets of plain paper.
* As motor skills increase, exercise books can be used for handwriting practice.
* A relaxed atmosphere will be created for writing – wrist shaking, scribbling and writing patterns will loosen up muscles in preparation for writing.
* Children will have a chair and table at a comfortable height.
* Children will be encouraged to sit up straight.
* Tables will be free of clutter.
* Left handed pupils will sit to the left of their partners.
* Teachers will discuss the focus of each handwriting lesson.
* Children will be encouraged to write at a reasonable speed to develop the skill of fluent handwriting.

**Handwriting Programme**

The handwriting programme used is ‘The Collins Primary Focus Handwriting Programme’ which is a comprehensive programme designed to support teachers and children through the stages of learning a clear, fluent, legible and fast style of joined writing from the early stages to Primary 7. The programme encourages a precursive and then a cursive style for the early stages of learning with joined handwriting introduced in Primary 3.

In Foundation Stage the letter formation will include the following:

* Demonstration by the teacher using the whiteboard and interactive whiteboard.
* Observation by the teacher.
* Talking the children through the process.
* Encouraging the children to verbalise what they are doing.
* Forming letters by drawing them in the air.
* Finger tracing over letters on desk or table tops.
* Writing over dotted or shadow writing.
* Drawing round templates.
* Writing in sand with a finger or stick.
* Writing with chalk on a chalkboard.
* Writing letters boldly with a wax candle and applying a colour wash.
* Forming letters with pegs on a pegboard.
* Finger tracing the outline of a letter on the back of another child.

**Presentation**

To encourage aesthetic presentation of written work children will:

* Take part in handwriting competitions.
* Have work displayed on noticeboards.
* Write out work for wall displays after first drafts have been corrected.
* Experiment with different ways of presenting writing e.g. curved or spiral writing, decorated capitals, writing over illustrations.

**Assessment**

Criteria for monitoring school-wide standards might include:

* Is the writing generally legible and pleasant?
* Are the letters correctly shaped and proportioned?
* Are the joins made correctly?
* Are the spaces between letters, words and lines appropriate?
* Is the size of the writing appropriate?

Criteria for individual assessment might include:

* Does the child adopt the correct posture?
* Does the child hold the pen/pencil correctly?
* Does the child use the correct movement when forming/joining letters?

**Celebration of Success**

Pupil progress and achievement in hand-writing will be regularly celebrated, with specific noticeboard displays in corridors and regular awards for improvement and achievement.